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PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL SUCCESS: IMPLICATIONS FOR FAMILY-TO-  
WORK CONFLICT AND FAMILY-TO-WORK ENHANCEMENT

by

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A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

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2013

This thesis, submitted by Tami Vigesaa in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done, and is hereby approved.

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This thesis is being submitted by the appointed advisory committee as having met all of the requirements of the Graduate School at the University of North Dakota and is hereby approved

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Title            Perceptions of Parental Success: Implications for Family-to-work Conflict  
and Family-to-work Enhancement

Department    Sociology

Degree        Master of Arts

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Tami Vigesaa  
April 10, 2013

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
ABSTRACT.....	vii
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
CHAPTER	
I.    INTRODUCTION.....	1
II.   THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE AND LITERATURE REVIEW.....	5
III.  DATA AND METHODS.....	18
IV.  RESULTS.....	22
V.   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....	32
REFERENCES.....	40

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Descriptive Statistics.....	23
2. Bivariate Correlations.....	26
3. OLS Regression for Variables Predicting Family-to-work Conflict.....	28
4. OLS Regression for Variables Predicting Family-to-work Enhancement.....	30

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## ABSTRACT

Recent studies have indicated an increased occurrence of dual-earner households, which means less free time for working parents. This trend means many parents are expressing concern about finding adequate time for work and family obligations. This is especially true for mothers, as evidenced in the additional pressures entailed in the prevailing ideology of intensive mothering. As such, these worries and concerns might impact parents while they are working, with people's feelings about their parenting potentially shaping their experiences in the workplace. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine how perceived parental success predicts family-to-work conflict (negative spillover from family to work) and family-to-work enhancement (positive spillover from family to work) among dual-earner working mothers and fathers. The study focuses solely on dual-earners with children because these families experience intense stressors stemming from juggling two jobs with parenting responsibilities. Based upon bivariate analysis and OLS regression results, preliminary findings indicate that perceived parental success was significantly and negatively associated with family-to-work conflict for both dual-earner mothers and fathers. The model predicting dual-earner father's family-to-work enhancement was not significant, however the results for mothers showed that perceived parental success was positively and significantly related to their family-to-work



enhancement. The implications of the findings are discussed along with directions for future research.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### *Overview*

In this chapter I introduce the research question of this thesis, describing relevant social factors that provide a background to this study. I also outline the contributions of this thesis to the larger literature. Additionally, I will provide a detailed outline of the remainder of the project.

#### *Introduction and Goal*

Recent studies have indicated an increased occurrence of dual-earner households, with the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics reporting that as of 2001, 64% of couples with children were dual earners (U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2002). This trend means less free time for many families (Galinsky, 1999). One study of the family time pressures placed on dual-earner couples found that more than 75% of parents in dual-earner couples experienced perceived time pressure (Roxburgh, 2006). Additionally, research has shown that men and women in these dual-earner couples tend to experience time pressures differently (Nomaguchi, Milkie & Bianchi, 2005; Roxburgh, 2006). Indeed, the trend of reduction in free time is especially true for mothers, as evidenced in the additional pressures entailed in the prevailing ideology of intensive mothering (Hays, 1996). According to Hays, intensive mothering requires a mother to be wholly devoted to raising her child even if a mother is employed. Because mothers are to be entirely focused on motherhood, there are often sacrifices made in other roles that they are trying

to fulfill at the same time (Hays, 1996). Additionally, society tends to categorize women based on whether they work outside of the home (prioritize work) or are stay-at-home mothers (prioritize home) (Dillaway & Pare, 2008), creating potential conflicts for women who participate in both spheres. This could result in additional pressures for mothers who participate in the labor force, as they then feel pressure to fulfill both roles to society's standards (Hays, 1996). While not studied as extensively, the recent call for the heavily involved "new father" places similar time pressures on fathers (Ranson, 2001). The decrease in available time, along with the increased expectations placed on parents, is blurring the roles between work and family for these parents and creating additional stress. As such, worries and concerns about fulfilling caretaking responsibilities might impact parents while they are working, with people's feelings about their parenting potentially shaping their experiences in the workplace.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to determine how perceived parental success, one type of feeling held by parents, shapes spillover from family to the workplace. More specifically, this research examines how perceptions of parental success predict family-to-work conflict (negative spillover from family to work) and family-to-work enhancement (positive spillover from family to work) among dual-earner mothers and fathers. I will also examine mothers and fathers separately to evaluate gender differences in these relationships. The study is focused solely on dual-earners with children because these families experience heightened stressors stemming from juggling two jobs with parenting responsibilities (Galinsky, 1999; Roxburgh, 2006).

It has long been understood that there is spillover between the spheres of work and family (Dilworth, 2004; Piotrkowski, 1978). Dilworth (2004) describes how each

sphere possesses unique attributes and roles, but there is overlap when activities, moods, and so forth spill over from one domain to the other. Several studies have examined the predictors and consequences of work-to-family conflict in relation to gender (Minnotte, Minnotte, Pedersen, Mannon & Kiger, 2010; Nomaguchi, 2011; Pleck, 1977; Schieman & Young, 2011), children (Barnett & Marshall, 1992; Barnett, 1994; Campbell & Campbell, 1994), family satisfaction (Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1992) and life and relationship satisfaction (Netemeyer et al., 1996). Whereas a great number of studies have examined work-to-family conflict and enhancement, there are very few that study the interface between family and work in the other direction - that is spillover from family to work - which is the focus of this thesis (Dilworth, 2004; Stevens, Minnotte, Mannon & Kiger, 2007). Additionally, studies on the impact of an individual's perceptions are not common (Haggag & Geser, 2012; Roxburgh, 2006), but I will draw from those that have been done to show a relationship between perceptions and outcomes. Doing so is important because subjective perceptions shape individuals' well-being. Ultimately, this thesis will enhance our theoretical understanding of the types of variables that lead to family-to-work conflict and facilitation.

### *Research Question and Methodology*

The question I aim to answer in this thesis is how perceived parental success predicts family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement among dual-earner parents. I am also looking at how these processes might differ between mothers and fathers. To address the research questions, I will analyze secondary data from the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce ( $N = 3,504$ ), looking specifically at dual-earner parents ( $N = 411$  dual-earner fathers and 404 dual-earner mothers). I will perform

analysis separately by gender to determine whether or not there are gender differences in how family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement relate to perceived parental success.

#### *Organization of the Remainder of This Thesis*

In Chapter II, I will examine the existing literature related to predictors of family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement. I will also describe role theory and how it relates to family-to-work conflict and enhancement. In Chapter III, I will outline the data and methods used in the study. In Chapter IV, I will examine the results. Lastly, in Chapter V, I will provide discussion and conclusions with relevant suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE AND LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Overview of Chapter*

The question I seek to answer in this study is how perceived parental success predicts family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement among dual-earner parents. In this chapter, I will provide a discussion of role theory, including role expansion theory. I will also present a review of past literature on family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement. Additionally, I will discuss the concepts of intensive mothering and recent societal changes calling for an increase in the involvement of fathers.

#### *Theory*

Many theorists have put forth arguments for role scarcity or role conflict theories, stating that as people spread themselves into multiple roles, stress and/or conflict results from the drain on their resources, including time, energy, and financial resources (Marks, 1977; Prottas & Hyland, 2011; Reid & Hardy, 1999; Warner & Hausdorf, 2009). Marks (1977) explained that individuals have a limited amount of energy, and when one is asked to give energy to multiple roles, there is less to give to each role. When the demands of one role exceed the amount of resources available to the individual, the result is role conflict (Gordon, Pruchno, Wilson-Genderson, Murphy, & Rose, 2011). Role conflict is reflected in this study in the examination of how low perceptions of parental success could lead to family-to-work conflict. According to these theories, such conflict would

occur as a result of poor performance perceptions in one role affecting one's performance in the other role.

While demands placed on an individual from multiple roles may lead to conflict, research has also found that holding multiple roles can have an enhancing effect (Reid & Hardy, 1999). The role enhancement or role expansion theory posits that being involved in multiple roles can have a positive impact on mental health and other outcomes (Moen, Robison, & Dempster-McClain, 1995). Additionally, positive interactions that may take place in one role can balance negative interactions in another role (Baruch & Barnett, 1986). Holding multiple roles also allows for additional resources to accrue to individuals, both emotional and financial, as well as making available more sources of support and outlets for stress release (Reid & Hardy, 1999).

As more research has looked at the expansionist perspective, models have been put forth that outline the ways positive spillover can result from being involved in multiple roles (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne & Grzywacz, 2006; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). These models assume that involvement in more than one role can produce positive spillover, rather than solely negative spillover as had been previously argued. Additionally, they contend that positive spillover between roles is separate from negative spillover (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Hanson, Hammer, Colton, 2006). Carlson and colleagues (2006) put forth three dimensions through which resources gained in one role could be transferred to the other role: development of skill/talent, affect (emotional influences), and capital. The role enhancement/expansion theory supports the idea that development in one role can benefit the individual in another role. This idea is directly related to the concept of family-to-work enhancement, which is one of the dependent

variables in this study. The theory suggests that being involved in more than one role can positively affect one's performance in each role, and that developments and emotional influences made in one role can have a positive effect on another. I contribute theoretically by identifying whether subjective perceptions of parenting may contribute to family-to-work enhancement.

### *Review of Literature*

The variables of family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement are based on research by Piotrkowski (1978) who argued that the two main systems in our lives -- work and family -- are not separate spheres and in fact spillover into one another. This spillover can be positive or negative and can occur in either direction – family-to-work or work-to-family (Googins, 1991). The term family-to-work conflict refers to spillover that is negative from the direction of the family role to the work role. This form of conflict occurs when issues in one's family negatively impact one's job, such as if a worker is dealing with a toddler who will not sleep, they may lack energy to fully perform their role at work. The term family-to-work enhancement refers to spillover that is positive from the direction of the family role to the work role. An example of this might be when a worker enjoys a fun-filled day with their family and is then able to come to work refreshed and full of energy the next day.

Work-to-family spillover (spillover from the direction of work to family) has been much more widely studied than family-to-work spillover (Dilworth, 2004; Higgins, Duxbury, & Irving, 1992). Additionally, most research is focused on negative spillover, or conflict, rather than positive spillover, or enhancement (Dilworth, 2004; Stevens et al., 2007). I will be contributing to the larger literature in the area of family-to-work conflict,



and also to the area of family-to-work enhancement – both areas that are currently understudied. As such, this study will help further our understanding of both family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement.

Although family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement are understudied, there is literature exploring predictors of these forms of spillover (Crouter, 1984, Dilworth, 2004, Voydanoff, 1988). Due to the lack of research in this area, I will provide a general review of the predictors of family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement. Authors use different terminology for family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement and in the review to follow I will use the terminology of the author.

### *Gender Differences*

One of the most studied aspects of family-to-work conflict is whether it may arise differently in men and women. These studies are characterized by conflicting results, with some showing differences and others finding none (Dilworth, 2004; Stevens et al., 2007; Voydanoff, 1988). Dilworth (2004) and Reid and Reynolds (2005) concluded that women experience more negative spillover from family-to-work than men. However, Kirchmeyer (1992) found that men noted stronger negative spillover from family than women. Stevens and colleagues (2007) found support for men and women experiencing positive spillover and negative spillover from family-to-work differently. One example from this study is that women's satisfaction with the division of labor at home was positively related to their experience of positive family-to-work spillover, but the same was not true for men. Additionally, Stevens and colleagues discovered that men's satisfaction with their relationship was positively connected to positive spillover from family-to-work, but the same was not true for women. Barnett and Marshall (1992)

conducted two studies, one of employed men and one of employed women, and saw no evidence of gender differences in positive spillover from home-to-work. In a later study, Barnett (1994) also concluded that when comparing employed mothers to their working husbands, there were no gender differences in home-to-work spillover.

### *Predictors of Family-to-Work Conflict*

There have been a number of studies that examine predictors of spillover beyond gender. For instance, some look at how job factors come into play. Reid and Reynolds (2005) stated that working in a job that is highly demanding or a job with low autonomy was related to increased negative spillover from family-to-work. Wadsworth and Owens (2007) discussed social support factors that may be related to work-family conflict and said that sources of support within the workplace enhanced family-to-work facilitation. Seery and colleagues (2013) argued that more study needs to focus on how emotion work on the job affects work-family conflict and facilitation. This study found that emotion work, such as surface acting, was related to an increase in family-to-work conflict. Dilworth (2004) concluded that the number of hours worked per week was a predictor of negative spillover for mothers. Along these same lines, one meta-analysis found that job stressors such as time demands, role conflict, and role overload within the work role lead to an increase in family-to-work conflict (Michel, et al., 2011). Hill (2005) noted that even though men reported less supportive work environments, they experienced less family-to-work conflict than women.

In addition to job and workplace factors, researchers have found race to be a predictor of family-to-work spillover. Dilworth (2004) argued that race was a predictor of negative spillover for mothers in that more white mothers experienced negative spillover

than non-whites. Roehling and colleagues (2005) also found race to be a factor in predicting family-to-work spillover, noting that possibly due to different gender roles in the Hispanic culture, Hispanic respondents had more marked gender differences in reporting negative family-to-work spillover.

Several studies have looked at how children might be a predictor of spillover. Barnett (1994) found that both the presence of children and their age can impact spillover for parents. The presence of children and the presence of young children both were related to increased negative spillover. Stewart (2013) contributed further to this finding in noting that employed caregivers with disabled children experience greater family-to-work conflict than those without disabled children. Hyde and colleagues (2004) also stated that for employed mothers, having a child with difficult behavior symptoms can increase family-to-work spillover. In a study using an objective indicator of family-to-work conflict (low productivity), Wallace and Young (2008) examined the impact of children on the productivity of women and men in the workplace, finding that the presence of school-aged children lead to lower productivity for working mothers (compared to non-mothers) and that the presence of preschool aged children lead to higher productivity for fathers (compared to non-fathers). This study also looked at the impact of family-friendly work policies, noting that fathers benefited more from family-friendly work policies than mothers in terms of seeing a decrease in family-to-work conflict which then increased productivity and leisure time. Additionally, a meta-analysis stated that stressors within the family role such as parent and time demands, children, and role overload lead to family-to-work conflict (Michel, et al., 2011). Based on the

available research, it is evident that children can be a predictor of spillover, but that this can affect mothers and fathers differently.

It has also been evident that family satisfaction or dissatisfaction contribute to family-to-work conflict, with those experiencing greater satisfaction experiencing less family-to-work conflict (Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1992; Frone, Yardley & Markel, 1997). In a related study, Dilworth (2004) concluded that family satisfaction had the strongest relationship with family-to-work conflict of the variables tested. Also focusing on family factors, Voydanoff (2005) argued that the demands of the family (such as time and care demands) affect family-to-work conflict in that increased family demands lead to greater family-to-work conflict.

On a more individual level, one factor that has been studied as a predictor of spillover is life satisfaction. Life satisfaction has been shown to impact family-to-work conflict, with those experiencing low life satisfaction also experiencing greater family-to-work conflict (Netemeyer, Boles, McMurrian, 1996). Education has also been found to be a predictor of negative spillover, as Dilworth (2004) found that the level of education was positively related to negative spillover for fathers, but not mothers. It was suggested that this was because those fathers with higher levels of education typically had higher stress jobs. Michel and colleagues found that an individual's personality can influence nonwork-to-work conflict as well as nonwork-to-work enhancement, including traits such as agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, and being open to new experiences (Michel, Clark, & Jaramillo, 2011). For example, it was found that individuals possessing greater agreeableness experienced less nonwork-to-work conflict and more nonwork-to-work enhancement than others.

### *Predictors of Family-to-Work Enhancement*

There is much less research available that looks at positive spillover from family to work. Voydanoff (2005) concluded that the demands of the family can lead to increased positive spillover from family-to-work. Hill (2005) reported similar conclusions, noting that there are positive relationships between family-to-work facilitation and marital satisfaction, family satisfaction, and life satisfaction. Stevens and colleagues (2007) found that men experienced positive family-to-work spillover when they had greater levels of satisfaction with their marital relationship. This study also stated that both men and women experienced positive spillover when they had higher levels of family cohesion. Others have examined whether or not gender predicts family-to-work enhancement with different results. Crouter (1984) argued that working women experienced more spillover (both positive and negative) than working men. Pleck (1977) suggests that women experience more family-to-work spillover than men due to the societal pressures they face in both roles. In this study, I will contribute to this literature gap by further studying family-to-work enhancement, and in particular, by investigating the relationship between parents' perceptions of success and family-to-work enhancement and family-to-work conflict.

### *Intensive Mothering*

Because I am studying perceived parental success and spillover it makes sense to explore cultural norms surrounding parenting, as these are the standards against which parents may rate their success. As such, these norms could affect a mother's perception of success as a parent. Furthermore, if a mother feels less success it may spillover negatively

into her performance in other roles and feelings of greater success may lead to positive spillover, leading to the question of whether perceived parental success shapes family-to-work enhancement and family-to-work conflict.

Intensive motherhood has become the dominant ideology for mothering in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and now into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Hays, 1996). The main premise behind this set of norms is that mothering is entirely centered around the child, actions are based on expert advice, mothering is emotionally draining and completely absorbing, and it is financially expensive. Hays also argued that mothers are influenced by this set of norms and that this ideology shapes how mothers think about themselves. As new mothers are trying to live up to the cultural expectations placed on them by intensive mothering practices, they are hit with the reality that there is not as much support as they were expecting, the demands of work/life while juggling a new baby are greater than they expected, and trying to be the perfect mother proves to be difficult (Hays, 1996).

Clearly, the social norm of intensive mothering is setting a high standard for mothers in terms of their level of involvement with and attachment to their child(ren). Mothers are expected to be able to juggle a full schedule of activities, while they are also stimulating the development of the child. At the same time, they have to maintain a perfect home, keep a fit body and styled hair, and obtain success in their careers (Hays, 1996). There are also overlapping and contradictory cultural standards in play for women and this sets women up for failure, as Hays (1996) describes the demand for women to both be great mothers and great career women. Feelings of inadequacy and guilt result from being unable to meet these standards (Lee, 2008; Tummala-Narra, 2009; Zimmerman, Aberle, Krafchick, Harvey, 2008). Women face anxiety about creating and

maintaining the right schedule for their child(ren), balancing the schedules of their families and themselves, and overseeing the overall well-being of their family (Bell, 2004; Hays, 1996; Johnston & Swanson, 2006).

### *The “New Father”*

More recently than the increased demands placed on mothers came the call for the “new father” (Ranson, 2001). This “new father” is much more involved in the parenting of children than the traditional breadwinner model allowed (Ranson, 2001). This father cares for his infant child, participates in childcare beyond just play, and does not pay more attention to his sons than his daughters (Pleck, 1987). However, as Ranson (2001) pointed out, while the role of the father has been changing over the past two decades, research on spillover between work and family for fathers has focused almost solely on work-to-family conflict, suggesting that the breadwinner role is still more important for fathers. As highlighted by Wall and Arnold (2007), this “new father” with equal parental involvement may be more visible in culture than in actual conduct. Indeed, they discovered that fathers still play a secondary role in parenting. Nonetheless, the suggested increase in demands on the father role reflected in the “new father” literature could shape family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement among fathers. This is because subjective perceptions about parenting originating in the family sphere could spillover to affect fathers in the work domain. As such, I examine whether perceived parental success shapes family-to-work enhancement and family-to-work conflict for working fathers.

### *Parental Perceptions*

In this study, I focus on the perceived success felt by parents. I expect to find that perceived parental success shapes family-to-work enhancement and family-to-work

conflict because increasing demands on mothers and fathers could lead to parents either being upset about not successfully meeting demands or being happy if they feel they are meeting them. These moods and feelings may then spill over into the work sphere.

Related literature using perceptions as an independent variable shows a relationship between perceptions of time strain and psychological well-being (Nomaguchi, Milkie and Bianchi, 2005). Additionally, a study done by Roxburgh (2006) examined the relationship between perceived time pressures and gender, finding that women feel the time with their family is lacking in quality, whereas men feel it is lacking in quantity. There is a definite gap present in the literature in terms of how perceptions affect family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement. This study contributes to closing that gap by exploring whether perceptions of parental success shapes family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement.

### *Hypotheses*

Based on role conflict theory, I propose that those mothers and fathers with lower levels of perceived parental success will experience greater family-to-work conflict. Lower levels of perceived parental success could lead to any number of things, including increased stress and negative thoughts about self, which could lead to negative spillover into other roles. As many mothers still play the primary parental role and are subject to more rigorous parenting norms, I expect this relationship to be stronger for mothers than for fathers. As such, I propose my first hypothesis:

H<sub>1</sub>: Dual-earner mothers and fathers with lower levels of perceived parental success will have greater family-to-work conflict, but the relationship will be stronger for working mothers.



Based on role enhancement/expansion theory, I propose that those mothers and fathers with higher levels of perceived parental success will experience greater family-to-work enhancement. Higher levels of perceived parental success could lead to feelings of satisfaction and confidence, which could lead to positive spillover. As many mothers still play the primary parental role, I expect this relationship to be stronger for mothers than for fathers. As such, I propose my second hypothesis:

H<sub>2</sub>: Dual-earner mothers and fathers with higher levels of perceived parental success will have greater family-to-work enhancement, but the relationship will be stronger for working mothers.

#### *Control Variables*

Within the analysis, I control for a number of variables that could be seen as potentially influential in predicting family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement. I control for respondent's education level and income, as these factors could affect attitudes toward cultural standards of parenting as well as access to resources to help them meet these standards (Nelson, 2010). Because previous studies have shown that children can shape family-to-work conflict (Barnett, 1994), I control for both the number of children under age 18 in the household as well as the presence of preschool children. Because feelings of parental success may be influenced by the amount of time available to spend with children, I control for the total hours worked per week, child care hours on workdays, and the respondent's feelings about the time they have to spend with their child(ren). I also control for the respondent's gender ideology, as their feelings about gender roles may influence how they feel they are doing in the parental role. As race may influence outcomes (Dilworth, 2004), I control for race as well.

### *Summary*

In summary, there are gaps in current literature, both in regards to family-to-work enhancement and family-to-work conflict, as well as how perceptions can affect these relationships. This study seeks to contribute to the research on work and family by examining how both family-to-work enhancement and family-to-work conflict can be shaped by perceptions of parental success held by working mothers and fathers.

In the next chapter, I will provide a summary of the data and methods used for this study. In Chapter IV, I will explain the analysis and results. Chapter V will include a discussion of the findings and conclusions.

## CHAPTER III

### DATA AND METHODS

#### *Overview of Chapter*

In this chapter, I will provide a description of the data used for this study and outline the measurement of the dependent and independent variables. Additionally, I will discuss the analytic strategies utilized to address the hypotheses.

#### *Sample*

The data for this study are from the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce ( $N = 3,504$ ), which was conducted in the US. The questionnaire was developed by the Families and Work Institute and administered via random digit dialing (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2002). The response rate for the survey was roughly 52 percent. Eligibility required the participant to be at least 18 years of age and employed. Because I am only focusing on dual-earner mothers and fathers, only respondents in these categories were included ( $N = 411$  dual-earner fathers and 404 dual-earner mothers).

#### *Dependent Variables*

The dependent variables for this study are *family-to-work conflict* and *family-to-work enhancement*. To measure *family-to-work* conflict respondents were asked how often the following occurred in the prior three months: “a) How often have you NOT been in as good a mood as you would like to be at work because of your personal or family life?; b) How often has your family or personal life kept you from doing as good

a job at work as you could?; c) How often has your family or personal life drained you of the energy you needed to do your job?; d) How often has your family or personal life kept you from concentrating on your job?; and e) How often have you not had enough time for your job because of your family?” Scores for these items included: 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, and 5 = very often. The items were summed and divided by five. The alpha reliability scores for this index were .822 for women and .819 for men. *Family-to-work enhancement* was measured with one item. Respondents were asked to indicate “In the past three months, how often have you been in a BETTER mood at work because of your personal or family life?” Scores for this item range from 1 = never to 5 = very often.

#### *Independent Variable*

The primary independent variable for this study is *perceived success as a parent*. The question used to measure this variable was: “On a scale of 1 to 10 – with 1 being not successful and 10 being very successful – how successful do you feel as a parent?” Very few respondents gave themselves a score of less than six. Hence, those who rated themselves lower than a six were recoded as six in order to decrease the skewness of the variable. The final range of scores for this variable was 6 - 10.

#### *Control Variables*

Several control variables were included in the analysis, including: *education, household income, number of children under 18 in the home, presence of preschool children, total hours worked per week, gender ideology, race, age, childcare on work day hours, and feelings about time with children*. Education was measured using a series of dummy variables including: less than high school, high school education, some college,

obtained a Bachelor's Degree, and obtained a graduate degree. High school was used as the comparison group. Each dummy variable was coded 1 = belongs to group and 0 = does not belong to the group. *Household income* was measured using a set of dummy variables divided into ranges, including those earning less than \$28,000, \$28,000 - \$79,999, and \$80,000 and above. For this variable the comparison group was the middle range of \$28,000 - \$79,999. *Number of children under 18 in the household* was measured by asking how many children under 18 were in the home. *Presence of preschool children in the home* was a dummy variable coded as 1 = at least one child of this age present and 0 = no children of this age present. To measure *total hours worked per week* respondents were asked to identify the total number of hours worked at all jobs per week. Respondents were asked about their *gender ideology* with the item: "How much do you agree or disagree that a mother who works outside the home can have just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work?" The options for response ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. Hence, high scores are indicative of more egalitarian gender ideologies. The variable *race* was a dummy variable in which white = 1 and all other races = 0. *Age* was measured in years. *Workday childcare hours* was measured by asking: "On average, on days when you're working, about how much time do you spend taking care of or doing things with your child/children?" Respondents could reply in minutes or hours. For this study, all responses were converted to hours. I also include a variable about the respondent's feelings about their time with children. This variable was measured with one item that asked "Do you feel that the time you have with your child/children is too much, just

enough, or not enough?” The answers were recoded such that too much or just enough = 0 and not enough = 1.

### *Analytic Strategy*

To gain a basic understanding of the variables, I will use descriptive statistics and present a bivariate correlation table. I will then conduct OLS regression using SPSS to analyze the relationships between perceptions of parental success and both family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement. I will use nested models, in which Model 1 includes only the control variables in predicting the dependent variables and Model 2 will add the independent variable, perceived parental success, to further test the strength of relationship between the independent and dependent variables. As I am conducting analysis separately for dual-earner mothers and fathers, there will be two corresponding models for each dependent variable (for a total of four models). By comparing the two models, I can also determine which model explains the most variance in the given dependent variable.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### *Introduction*

In this chapter I discuss the main findings of this thesis in an attempt to answer the research question of how perceptions of parental success predict family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement. I also consider gender differences in terms of these relationships. First, I will detail descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations. I will then discuss the bivariate correlations. Next, I will describe results from the multivariate analysis that I conducted using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. Finally, I will discuss the findings in relation to the proposed hypotheses.

#### *Descriptive Statistics*

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. Mothers who responded were roughly 38 years old on average ( $M = 38.30$ ,  $SD = 8.44$ ), and fathers were around 40 years old on average ( $M = 40.51$ ,  $SD = 8.03$ ). The majority of the respondents were white (74% of males, 83% of females). The average number of children under age 18 in households was 1.9 for mothers ( $SD = 1.21$ ) and 2.0 for men ( $SD = 1.04$ ), and roughly 39% of mothers and 40% of fathers had a child under the age of 6 in the home. Only 7.5 percent of mothers were in the lowest income category (less than \$28,000), while 9.2% of fathers were in this category. Conversely, 35.9% of mothers were in the highest income category (greater than \$80,000), and 38.4% of fathers were in this group. Approximately

56.6% of mothers and 52.4% of fathers fell into the middle income category (earning between \$28,000 and \$79,999). Roughly one-third of all respondents have attended some college (30.7% mothers, 29.6% fathers) and only a small percentage reported having either less than high-school or post-graduate education. Both of these categories showed higher responses from fathers, with 12.51% of fathers having less than a high school degree compared to 7.8% of mothers, and 8.84% of fathers reporting post-graduate degrees compared to 8.54% of mothers. In the comparison category, 28% of both mothers and fathers reported only a high school education.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics*

Variable	Mothers		Fathers	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Number of children under 18	1.89*	1.21	1.96*	1.04
Presence of children under 6	.39	-	.40	-
Income less than \$28,000	.08*	-	.10*	-
Income \$28,000 – \$79,000	.57	-	.52	-
Income higher than \$80,000	.36*	-	.38*	-
Race <sup>a</sup>	.83	-	.74	-
Less than high school	.08*	-	.13*	-
High school	.28	-	.28	-
Some college	.31*	-	.30*	-
College degree	.25*	-	.21*	-
Post-graduate degree	.09	-	.09	-
Age	38.29*	8.44	40.51*	8.03
Gender ideology	3.20*	.96	2.90*	1.06
Feelings about time with children <sup>b</sup>	.59*	.49	.69*	.46
Child care on workday hours	3.83*	3.30	2.76*	2.56
Work hours	39.97*	14.66	51.06*	13.19
Perceived parental success	8.39	1.20	8.21	1.22
Family-to-work enhancement	3.56	1.07	3.57	1.04
Family-to-work conflict	2.12	.73	2.18	.73

<sup>a</sup>Race is a dummy variable that was coded 1 if the respondent is white and 0 if the respondent is non-white. <sup>b</sup> Responses recoded as ‘not enough’ = 1, ‘too much’ or ‘just enough’ = 0. \*A two-tailed t test was significant at the .05 level or lower.

The mothers in this study worked, on average, 40 hours per week ( $M = 39.97$ ,  $SD = 14.66$ ), whereas fathers worked an average of 51 hours per week ( $M = 51.06$ ,  $SD =$



13.19). Mothers spent roughly 3.8 hours on child care on work days on average ( $SD = 3.30$ ) and fathers roughly 2.76 hours on average ( $SD = 2.56$ ). The majority of respondents reported they did not have enough time with their child(ren) (69% of fathers and 59% of mothers). Mothers were only slightly less traditional in terms of their gender ideology than fathers ( $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = .96$  for mothers and  $M = 2.90$ ,  $SD = 1.06$  for fathers).

In terms of the key study variables, scores were fairly parallel for mothers and fathers. Family-to-work conflict results were similar between mothers and fathers, with a mean of 2.12 for mothers ( $SD = .73$ ) and a mean of 2.18 for fathers ( $SD = .73$ ). Results were also very similar for family-to-work enhancement, for which scores for mothers averaged 3.56 ( $SD = 1.10$ ) and fathers averaged 3.57 ( $SD = 1.04$ ). Mothers scored only slightly higher than fathers in the category of perceived parental success, ( $M = 8.39$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ,  $M = 8.21$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ , respectively).

### *Bivariate Analysis*

I conducted bivariate correlations to determine how selected variables in this study are related to each other. The results of the bivariate correlations are provided in Table 2. Here I will focus on the variables that were significantly related to the dependent variables family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement.

For mothers, perceived parental success was negatively and significantly related to family-to-work conflict ( $r = -.33$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This same relationship was found for fathers ( $r = -.29$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The number of hours worked per week was also significantly related to family-to-work conflict for mothers ( $r = .17$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Child care hours on workdays per week was negatively and significantly related to family-to-work conflict for mothers ( $r = -.15$ ,  $p < .01$ ), while feelings about time spent with children was

positively and significantly associated with family-to-work conflict ( $r = .12, p < .05$ ). For fathers, the number of children under 18 was positively and significantly associated with family-to-work conflict ( $r = .14, p < .01$ ).

The findings for mothers showed a positive and significant relationship between perceived parental success and family-to-work enhancement, as did the findings for fathers ( $r = .14, p < .01$  for mothers;  $r = .23, p < .001$  for fathers). The number of hours spent doing childcare on workdays was also positively and significantly related to family-to-work enhancement for mothers ( $r = .13, p < .01$ ). The presence of preschool children was positively and significantly associated with family-to-work enhancement for fathers ( $r = .12, p < .05$ ), as was gender ideology ( $r = .14, p < .01$ ).

### *Regression*

I used OLS regression to examine the relationships between family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement and perceived parental success. The results of the regression are provided in Table 3 (family-to-work conflict) and 4 (family-to-work enhancement). I ran two models for both dual-earner mothers and fathers; the first model only includes the control variables and the second model adds the independent variable of perceived parental success.

### *Family-to-Work Conflict*

First, I will present the findings pertaining to family-to-work conflict (see Table 3). The discussion of the findings will begin by focusing on the results for the control variables. As evident in Table 3, race was significantly related to family-to-work conflict for mothers, with white mothers experiencing more conflict than non-white mothers.

Table 2. *Bivariate Correlations for Selected Independent Variables*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Family-to-work conflict	*	-.08	-.29***	.14**	.02	-.04	-.02	.04	-.05
2. Family-to-work enhancement	-.08	*	.23***	-.01	.12*	-.02	.09	.01	.14**
3. Perceived parental success	-.33***	.14**	*	-.09*	.07	.06	.22***	-.04	.18***
4. Number of kids under 18	.01	.08	-.01	*	.15**	.01	.05	.11*	-.02
5. Presence of children under 6	.01	.07	.001	.09*	*	-.004	.24***	.10*	.11*
6. Work hours	.17***	-.04	-.08	-.03	-.05	*	-.09	.15**	.07
7. Child care on workday hours	-.15**	.13**	.13**	.05	.30***	-.22***	*	-.01	.18***
8. Feelings about time with children	.12*	.02	-.11*	-.06	-.06	.15**	-.26***	*	.02
9. Gender ideology	.05	.01	.03	-.05	.03	.11*	-.01	-.15**	*

Note: Dual-earner mothers' coefficients are reported below the diagonal and dual-earner fathers' coefficients are reported above the diagonal. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$  (two-tailed test).

Additionally, among mothers, those holding a college degree or post-graduate degree experienced more family-to-work conflict than those holding high school degrees. Also significant for mothers was the number of hours worked per week, with those working more reporting higher levels of family-to-work conflict.

For fathers, Model 1 showed a significant relationship between the number of children under the age of 18 and the amount of family-to-work conflict, with those who have more children reporting greater conflict. The level of conflict for fathers was also significantly associated with earning a low income, working more hours, and having less than a high school education (compared to having a high school education) in Model 1.

Regarding family-to-work conflict, Hypothesis 1 predicted that parents experiencing lower levels of perceived parental success would experience increased levels of family-to-work conflict and that this relationship would be stronger for mothers. For both mothers and fathers, Model 2 showed a significant relationship between the level of perceived parental success and the amount of family-to-work conflict reported, with those who feel greater levels of parental success experiencing less family-to-work conflict than those who felt more ( $\beta = -.28, p = .001$  for mothers and  $\beta = -.27, p = .001$ ). Hypothesis one was partially supported in that mothers and fathers with lower levels of perceived parental success did report greater family-to-work conflict. However, the strength of the relationship was nearly identical for mothers and fathers so the second part of the hypothesis was unsupported.

Using nested models allowed for an exploration of the value of perceived parental success for explaining variance in the dependent variables. With the addition of the independent variable, perceived parental success, in Model 2, the  $R^2$  change was .07 for

mothers and .06 for fathers, and this change was significant for both groups. This finding means that an additional 7% of the variance in family-to-work conflict was explained with the addition of perceptions of parental success for mothers and an additional 6% of the variance was explained for fathers once perceived parental success was added.

Table 3. *Standardized Coefficients for Models Examining Family-to-Work Conflict for Dual-Earner Mothers and Fathers (N = 411 dual-earner fathers and 404 dual-earner mothers)*

Model	1		2	
Family-to-work conflict by:	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers
Number of children under 18	.03(.03)	.10*(.04)	.02(.03)	.08(.03)
Presence of children under 6	.02(.09)	.04(.09)	-.01(.08)	.03(.09)
Income less than \$28,000 <sup>a</sup>	.08(.14)	.15**(.14)	.08(.13)	.13*(.13)
Income higher than \$80,000 <sup>a</sup>	-.04(.08)	-.01(.08)	-.04(.08)	.04(.08)
Race <sup>b</sup>	.20***(.09)	-.03(.09)	.16**(.09)	-.03(.09)
Less than high school <sup>c</sup>	-.06(.14)	.14*(.14)	-.01(.14)	.17**(.13)
Some college <sup>c</sup>	.08(.09)	.06(.10)	.06(.09)	.07(.09)
College degree <sup>c</sup>	.19**(.10)	.05(.11)	.18**(.10)	.07(.10)
Post-graduate degree <sup>c</sup>	.15**(.14)	.10(.14)	.16**(.14)	.10*(.14)
Age	-.06(.01)	.06(.01)	-.07(.01)	.05(.01)
Gender ideology	-.10(.04)	-.38(.03)	-.08(.01)	-.01(.03)
Feelings about time with children <sup>d</sup>	.08(.08)	.02(.08)	.06(.07)	.02(.08)
Child care on workday hours	-.09(.01)	-.02(.02)	-.08(.01)	.04(.01)
Work hours	.17**(.002)	.04(.003)	.15**(.002)	.05(.003)
Perceived parental success	--	--	-.28***(.03)	-.27***(.03)
R <sup>2</sup>	.14	.08	.21	.14
Change in R <sup>2</sup>	-	-	.07	.06
F for model	4.57***	2.39**	6.95***	4.36***
F for change in R <sup>2</sup>	-	-	34.74***	29.58***

<sup>a</sup>Middle income (\$28,000 – 79,999) was used as the comparison category, <sup>b</sup>Race is a dummy variable that was coded 1 if the respondent is white and 0 if the respondent is non-white, <sup>c</sup>High school education was used as the comparison category, <sup>d</sup>Coded as ‘not enough’ = 1 and ‘too much’ or ‘just enough’ = 0. \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001 (two-tailed test).

Table 4 presents the results of analysis using the OLS regression in predicting family-to-work enhancement. The overall model was significant for mothers but not fathers. Because the model for fathers was not significant, the specific findings pertaining

to fathers will not be discussed. Relationships pertaining to control variables will be discussed first.

Both models showed a significant relationship between the presence of preschool children and an increase in family-to-work enhancement for mothers. For both models, mothers that had gone to only some college experienced less family-to-work enhancement than those with high school degrees. Both models showed that mothers with less traditional gender ideology experience more family-to-work enhancement than those with more traditional gender ideologies.

The first part of the second hypothesis stated that dual-earner mothers and fathers with higher levels of perceived parental success will have greater family-to-work enhancement and this was supported for mothers. This was unsupported for fathers, as the model predicting their family-to-work enhancement was not significant. Hypothesis 2 also stated that this relationship would be stronger for mothers. This part of the hypothesis was supported as the model was only significant for mothers.

Again, because I used nested models, this enabled exploration of the value of perceived parental success for explaining variance in the dependent variables. With the addition of the independent variable, perceived parental success, in Model 2, the  $R^2$  change was .05 for mothers and this change was significant. This finding means that an additional 5% of the variance in family-to-work enhancement was explained with the addition of perceptions of parental success for mothers.

Along with the hypotheses, I sought to determine if there were any gender differences present in these relationships, and I found that there were divergences in terms of predictors of family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement. Race

was significantly related to family-to-work conflict for mothers, but not for fathers.

Further, holding a college or post-graduate degree was significantly related to family-to-work conflict for mothers but not fathers. However, having completed less than a high school education was shown to be significantly related to greater levels of family-to-work conflict for fathers, but not significant for mothers. The number of hours worked per week was also significantly related to an increase in family-to-work conflict for mothers but was insignificant for fathers.

Table 4. *Standardized Coefficients for Models Examining Family-to-Work Enhancement for Dual-Earner Mothers and Fathers (N = 411 dual-earner fathers and 404 dual-earner mothers)*

Model	1		2	
Family-to-work enhancement by:	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers
Number of children under 18	-.08(.05)	.07(.05)	-.05(.05)	.08(.05)
Presence of children under 6	.13*(.12)	.05(.14)	.14*(.12)	.06(.13)
Income less than 28k <sup>a</sup>	-.09(.19)	.07(.22)	-.07(.19)	.07(.21)
Income higher than 80k <sup>a</sup>	.11(.11)	.13*(.13)	.06(.11)	.13*(.13)
Race <sup>b</sup>	-.04(.13)	.01(.14)	-.04(.12)	.03(.14)
Less than high school <sup>c</sup>	.01(.19)	-.04(.23)	-.02(.19)	-.06(.23)
Some college <sup>c</sup>	-.21***(.13)	.04(.14)	-.22***(.13)	.04(.14)
College degree <sup>c</sup>	-.11(.15)	-.01(.16)	-.12*(.15)	-.01(.16)
Post-graduate degree <sup>c</sup>	-.11(.20)	.03(.22)	-.11*(.19)	.03(.22)
Age	-.002(.01)	-.001(.01)	.01(.01)	.01(.01)
Gender ideology	.14**(.05)	.02(.06)	.11*(.05)	.01(.06)
Feelings about time with children <sup>d</sup>	.02(.11)	.08(.12)	.03(.11)	.09(.12)
Child care on workday hours	.03(.02)	.09(.02)	-.03(.02)	-.09(.02)
Work hours	-.02(.004)	-.04(.004)	-.02(.004)	-.03(.004)
Perceived parental success	--	--	.24***(.04)	.12*(.05)
R <sup>2</sup>	.09	.05	.15	.06
Change in R <sup>2</sup>	-	-	.05	.01
F for model	2.91***	1.30	4.47***	1.60
F for change in R <sup>2</sup>	-	-	24.00***	5.49

<sup>a</sup>Middle income (\$28,000 – 79,999) was used as the comparison category, <sup>b</sup>Race is a dummy variable that was coded 1 if the respondent is white and 0 if the respondent is non-white, <sup>c</sup>High school education was used as the comparison category, <sup>d</sup>Coded as ‘not enough’ = 1 and ‘too much’ or ‘just enough’ = 0. \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001 (two-tailed test).

The presence of preschool children in the home was significantly related to family-to-work enhancement for mothers, but not for fathers. Also, obtaining some college education was significant for mothers, as those with this education level experienced less family-to-work enhancement than those with a high school degree. This was not a significant factor for fathers. Gender ideology was a significant factor for mothers in that holding to less traditional gender ideologies was related to an increase in family-to-work enhancement, but gender ideology was not significant for fathers. Perceived parental success was an important predictor of both mothers' and fathers' family-to-work conflict, but was more important in predicting mothers' family-to-work enhancement compared to fathers.

#### *Summary and Overview of Next Chapter*

In this chapter, I reviewed the main findings of this thesis, providing descriptive statistics for each variable analyzed. I also presented bivariate correlations for selected variables. The results of the multivariate analysis showed that, along with several control variables, perceived parental success was significantly related to family-to-work conflict for both mothers and fathers, with those holding lower feelings of parental success experiencing greater family-to-work conflict. Additionally, the results indicated that the family-to-work enhancement model was only significant for mothers, and that mothers experiencing greater perceptions of parental success experienced more family-to-work enhancement.

In the next chapter, I will provide a summary of the results and discuss how they relate to the larger literature. I will then discuss potential implications both for future research and for policy making. Finally, I will discuss the limitations of the study.



## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

#### *Overview*

In this chapter I will summarize the findings of the study and detail how this research contributes to the existing literature. Next, I will discuss the limitations of the study. Finally, I will explain the implications of the findings, both for future research and larger society.

#### *Summary and Interpretation of Results*

In this study I examined the relationships between perceptions of parental success and family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement. Using role enhancement theory and guided by previous literature, I suggested that greater levels of perceived parental success would be related to increased family-to-work enhancement, whereas lower levels of perceived parental success would be related to increased family-to-work conflict. I tested these hypotheses using OLS regression with nested models.

As described in the previous chapter, I found that dual-earner mothers and fathers with lower levels of perceived parental success experienced greater family-to-work conflict than those with higher levels of perceived parental success. Additionally, mothers with higher levels of parental success experienced greater family-to-work enhancement than those with lower levels of success. In contrast, the family-to-work enhancement model was not significant for fathers. Also, a few gender differences

became apparent in terms of which variables were significant predictors of the dependent variables for mothers as compared to fathers.

One interesting finding was that the relationship between perceived parental success and family-to-work conflict was very similar for mothers and fathers. One of the reasons that perceptions of parental success could affect mothers' family-to-work conflict is due to the stringent parenting norms present for mothers today (Hays, 1996). As mothers may be holding themselves to higher standards based on societal expectations, mothers may also be more critical of their role performance, as well as be more emotionally affected by these perceptions, allowing for more family-to-work conflict. The finding that fathers with lower levels of perceived parental success also experience increased family-to-work conflict shows that fathers are also experiencing some amount of self-critique, which could perhaps be based upon the new norms for fathering that have emerged in recent years (Ranson, 2001). However, other findings emphasized that breadwinning norms may still be central for fathers. For example, those fathers that were not meeting the breadwinner ideal, those with low income and education levels, experienced greater family-to-work conflict than other fathers. One finding that reflected a gender difference was that work hours were significantly related to increased family-to-work conflict for mothers but not for fathers. This could again tie back to the intensive mothering ideology that is prevalent today, as those mothers who are working more hours have less time to spend on their mother role.

The most striking gender pattern was the notable gender differences in the area of family-to-work enhancement. It was surprising to find that the model predicting family-to-work enhancement was not even significant for fathers. This is contradictory to the

research previously discussed about role enhancement theory, which posits that enhancement and positive interactions in one role will benefit the individual in another role (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne & Grzywacz, 2006; Reid & Hardy, 1999). This could be due to fathers in general not being as dedicated to the parent role as traditionally their role has been that of breadwinner or perhaps fathers establish firmer boundaries between family and work than mothers do. It may be the case that because of the traditional breadwinner ideology men are not seeing that their family lives could benefit their work lives, as they may view their provider role as taking priority over active fathering. However, in line with the role enhancement theory, women who had higher levels of perceived parental success (success in one role) did experience higher levels of family-to-work enhancement (benefit in another role). It would make sense, based on this theory, that positive emotions and experiences in one role would spill into another role and have a positive effect there for mothers. Further, as suggested by the ideology of intensive mothering, those mothers that feel as though they are successfully balancing family and work and are living up to social criteria for mothering may experience these positive assessments spilling into their work life as well.

Other gender patterns were evident as well. One additional gender difference was that education operates differently for fathers and mothers – with higher levels of education being related to increased family-to-work conflict for mothers, while lower levels of education were related to increased family-to-work conflict for fathers. This again ties back to intensive mothering ideology, which suggests that those with higher levels of education tend to embrace more stringent intensive mothering norms (Hays, 1996). This also relates back to the breadwinner ideology which suggests that men should

have successful, high-paying careers. An additional finding that stands out is that the number of hours spent doing childcare on workdays was positively and significantly related to family-to-work enhancement for mothers. This ties back into the ideology of intensive mothering, suggesting that when a mother has more time to spend with their child, they feel as though they are a better parent and this may spill over to positively impact their work performance. This finding is somewhat surprising given that most literature posits preschool children as the most challenging and likely to detract from work (Barnett, 1994). Additionally, gender ideology was significantly and positively related to family-to-work enhancement for mothers but not for fathers. This suggests that those mothers that hold less traditional gender ideology experience greater family-to-work enhancement than those with more traditional gender ideology.

#### *Contribution to Literature*

As I have discussed in earlier chapters, there is a gap in current literature in explaining predictors of family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement, with family-to-work enhancement being especially understudied (Dilworth, 2004). This study examines antecedents of both family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement. Additionally, there are few studies that investigate the effect of perceptions on individual work-family outcomes (Roxburgh, 2006). This study furthers the existing literature by analyzing the impact of perceptions of parental success on family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement, finding that lower levels of perceived parental success do positively and significantly impact levels of family-to-work conflict for both dual-earner mothers and fathers. Higher levels of perceived parental success were found to positively and significantly impact levels of family-to-work enhancement for dual-earner mothers.

In demonstrating these relationships, this study highlights that subjective perceptions of parenting can impact individual outcomes. This study stands out from past studies of family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement (Voydanoff, 1988) in that it looks at this subjective indicator as a predictor of family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement. It also provides a gender comparison showing differences in how mothers and fathers experience family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement differently.

The findings are somewhat contradictory to role enhancement theory (Reid & Hardy, 1999), in that increased levels of perceived parental success were not significantly related to family-to-work enhancement for fathers, but there was a significant relationship for mothers. Rather, role conflict theory seems to fit the experiences of fathers better, as negative aspects of one role were found to be related to conflict in another role. This could indicate that, whereas fathers may be better able to establish boundaries between work and family that limit spillover, these boundaries may not be effective at preventing negative spillover, or family-to-work conflict.

#### *Limitations of Study*

As with any study, there are limitations with the research I have presented. One limitation of this study is that the data are from 2002. Future research could utilize more recent data to see if these trends are still occurring. Although, current cultural norms pertaining to parenthood remain fairly steady, so the findings would likely mirror those presented here. A second limitation of the study is the use of one item to measure perceived parental success. This might reduce variation in this variable and possibly inflate the scores. Third, the data were also cross-sectional, which limits the ability to

establish the direction of causality. Not having longitudinal data, we cannot be certain that family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement actually impact perceived parental success rather than vice versa (as I propose in this thesis). Finally, the question used to measure family-to-work conflict included “due to family or personal life” and as such, it is possible that respondents may have answered this question based on feelings about their personal life instead of their family. However, because I only included dual-earner mothers and fathers in this study, the effect of this may be lessened.

### *Implications for Research and Practice*

There are several avenues in which this study could be built upon, including looking at married couples that are in single-earner families and determining whether or not single-earner families would be affected by perceptions of parental success in the same way dual-earner parents are. Additionally, this study could be expanded to include a comparison of single parents, comparing single mothers to dual-earner mothers and single fathers to dual-earner fathers. Another beneficial area for research would be to conduct a qualitative study based on these findings to gather more in-depth details about why men and women are affected differently. This could provide insight into the gender differences highlighted by this study, which could also enhance understandings of role enhancement theory.

The findings that suggest that lower perceptions of parental success lead to family-to-work conflict imply we need to do more to enhance parents’ perceptions of success. This includes changing the standards that we rate parents against, which would require rethinking the current cultural standards of parenting. This also should include parent education and more support services or options for those parents that need

assistance. This sort of cultural change would require more honesty about real-life parenting in media of all forms, including social media and blogs. Media needs to start showcasing what life actually looks like for the majority of families, rather than continuing to put forward an ideal that is unachievable for the majority of the audience. New parent education needs to include conversations about what might happen – not just what ideally will happen, which sets the standard too high. As evidenced here, there are benefits to parents thinking they are performing well in their parental roles and there are negative effects of parents thinking they are doing poorly. These negative effects have such an impact that they can spill over into the work domain, affecting focus and performance, as well as relationships and interpersonal interactions in the workplace.

Additionally, based on these results, a closer look family policies might be of benefit to corporations. Including more family-friendly policies, such as flexible schedule or telecommuting, may allow employees to feel as though they are better balancing both roles, which we have seen may positively impact their work performance. Corporations like Best Buy and Target offer one-stop-shops for their employees such that they can have childcare on site, buy groceries, and take care of their laundry (Brady, Glassman, Hoekstra, Lewis, & Wagenknecht, 2009). This is seen as freeing up time and energy to perform better both as employees and as parents. Yahoo was in the news recently for taking a step in the other direction by requiring their employees to be in the office rather than allowing them to telecommute as they had in the past (Klobucher, 2013). This may serve to increase family-to-work conflict in that it is taking away from the flexibility offered to working parents which may have previously enabled them to balance both roles better. Along these same lines, family-friendly activities such as holiday parties or

summer picnics go one step further to show the employee that the company understands they have a family and they value that part of their life as well.

### *Conclusion*

In this study, I examined how perceived parental success relates to family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enhancement for dual-earner mothers and fathers. The analysis utilized data from the 2002 NSCW and confirmed that lower levels of perceived parental success were related to an increase in family-to-work conflict for both dual-earner mothers and fathers, which supported my first hypothesis. However, the model predicting family-to-work enhancement was not significant for dual-earner fathers, and as such, hypothesis two was not supported for fathers. This finding contradicts the role enhancement perspective. There was a significant relationship between higher levels of perceived parental success and family-to-work enhancement for dual-earner mothers, however. I also discussed limitations of the study and implications for research and practice, with particular attention paid to the importance of setting more realistic cultural standards for parenthood.



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